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Subject: City Council Public Hearing Testimony

April 4, 2012

**CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3077**

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Budget Committee

Voting Members:

Ann H. Kobayashi, Chair
Tulsi Gabbard, Vice Chair
Ikaika Anderson
Romy M. Cachola
Stanley Chang

Re: Testimony for Bill 12 and Bill 30

Dear Budget Committee Members,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in **SUPPORT** of Bills 12 and 30 to amend the ordinance pertaining to the Dedication of lands for Agricultural Use to include horse boarding and stabling.

We are the owners of a horse stabling business, JML Enterprises LLC (dBA B&R Ranch), located in Kahaluu, Hawaii. We purchased the property in 2008 and began the stabling business in February 2009, dedicating a vast majority of our property to the sheltering, grazing, and training of horses.

We are both raised in Kailua and grew up riding in Waimanalo over 30 years ago. We purchased the property with the intention of running a horse boarding and stabling facility, to provide an additional opportunity for the horse community and its young members and to promote this traditional way of life.

We currently have 8 boarders and 20 plus students that range from 6 to 50+ years old. The facility is a registered business with the State of Hawaii and we pay GET taxes on the income from the business. Indirectly we support many local businesses, spending in the neighborhood of \$5,000 monthly on feed, farriers, dental and other medical care for the horses. This does not count the many thousands of dollars spent at the local hardware store on the maintenance of the facility. All of these enterprises, especially the ones directly serving the animal, would suffer greatly if we were forced to shut down.

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Our facility provides an environment for horse enthusiasts to care for, ride and perpetuate the activity in a safe and positive setting. Removing the agricultural dedication from our property would probably double our property tax, an increase which we would be forced to ultimately be passed on to the individuals (there is no way we could absorb this increase), resulting in at least a 150% increase in boarder fees and an increase in riding costs. This is an enormous increase at a time when the price to care for the animals has rising to significantly high levels. In comparison to the US mainland, feed and shelter for the horses in Hawaii cost approximately 200% more. This increase in board fees would force a very large majority of owners to simply cease their participation in the activity in which case we would be forced to shut down the facility

Furthermore, the facility provides an outlet for adolescents to participate in an activity that teaches them responsibility, patience, respect and gives them a better self-esteem and self-worth. Being a part of the equine community motivates them to become productive and engaged community members, now and throughout their adult life. We have seen the individuals that board and ride at our facility, and across the islands gain social and academic skills, improve their self-esteem and learn respect towards their peers, school and community through daily interaction with positive role models. The possibly of removing this from the adolescents would result in a negative effect.

We understand the intent of the original Bill 44 and agree that it would be beneficial to prevent the abuse of the ag exemption by homeowners who are not actually using their property for agricultural purposes. However, we believe that punishing, and possibly destroying an entire industry, especially one as beneficial and historically significant as horseback riding, is not the best way to prevent these abuses and thus ask you to support the revisions as proposed in Bill 12 and Bill 30.

Thank you for your consideration,

Aloha

Jon and Jen Littenberg

B&R Ranch